***British-Russian cultural relations***

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**2017**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Relations between Russia and the United Kingdom historically have never been easy but hopefully now"The icy relationship between the UK and Russia is thawing" according to the recent events like this statement: «The book of Russo-British relations has long been awaiting someone to turn over to a better page in the history of bilateral cooperation. If Britain’s Foreign Office, under its new leader, has a corresponding desire, we will support it», [said](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2354135) Russia’s Foreign Ministry’s spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova in a statement. And especially after evidence of mutual benefits of two-way relations which are still fragile but wanted by both countries and The UK-Russia Year of Culture only enhanced it by celebrating the rich and diverse cultural heritage of both countries and spawned to develop stronger relations between people, institutions and our governments.So as relations between Russia and the United Kingdom grow increasingly strained, cultural exchanges may build a bridge over the troubled waters of politics.

**HISTORY**



The relationship between our countries were set in obscure times for both Russia and Great Britain – during the rule of Ivan the Terrible and Mary I. That time was bloody and full of horrors due to the "terrible and bloody" monarchs of these two countries. However, cultural bounds between two countries were always the major priority for both and were the following :

First middle of XVIth century. History of diplomatic and commercial relations between Great Britain and Russia began in middle of XVI century, then Ivan the Terrible received English traveler Richard Chensler in Moscov.

Second middle of XVIth century. Ivan the Terrible charged Anthony Jenkinson with negotiations about the forming of an alliance. Jenkinson, the agent in “Moscov Company”, visited Russia four times (for the last time in 1572). British doctors, builders, architects were invited in Russia. The invitation of qualified makers was the second of Russian interests after the forming of an alliance. In 1577 Ivan the Terrible invited engineer Gemfree Lock, his assistant John Finting, the Goldsmith and authers makes in Russia

Second middle of XVIth century was the time of Russian-British acquaintance, which had taken place during the development of the trade. The traveler’s works about Russia published in Britain; in British literature there is a lot of information about Moscovitas; British merchants and diplomats learnt Russian.

The late XVIth century and the early XVIIth century. During the government of Boris Godounoff new stage in the history of relations between Britain and Russia had begun. Godounoff wanted to create the University. He invited British scientists and sent 18 youths to study in Britain. This was the first Russian trip in Britain for the introduction. They were sent in England, Winchester, Iton, Cambridge and Oxford.

The late XVIth century and the early XVIIth century. However, cultural relations between Russia and Britain became perceptible in first middle of XVIIth century. In 1621 Christopher Gallaway, British watch-maker, arrived in Moscow. In 1624 he changed the clock of Spasskaya Tower. Gallaway corrected the clock after the fire in 1626 and 1628. He decorated Spasskaya Tower with ornaments in Gothic and Renaissance styles. British architects works influenced the development of Russian Culture.

The late XVIth century and the early XVIIth century. Britain interested and felt for the events of Trouble. In 1614 Henry Breketson published his memoirs “The latest news about Russia”.

The late XVIth century and the early XVIIth century. Russian had plenty of knowledges about Britain. European works on geography, which contained some information about British culture, was translated into Russian Language. Russians studied English language.

Second middle of XVIIth century. The execution of Carles I in Britain was the cause of rupture Russian-British diplomatic relations. After the rehabilitation of Russian-British relations Britain wasn’t interested much in Russia. But in 1696 in Oxford Vilgelm Ludolf wrote “Grammatica Russica”. In 1679 Samuel Collins (1619-1670) published his work “The present State of Russia”. In the late XVIIth century Russia and Britain acquainted with their cultures.

The outset of XVIIIth century. Since Peter’s government the active study of European culture began. Peter I invited in Russia British men. In 1704 Robert Areskin, British medical men, was invited in Russia as the doctor in Mechnikoff family. Areskin and Leybnits created Academy of Science. Peter I became very popular in Britain. British writers dedicated their works to Peter.

The second middle of XVIIIth century. Many British men were invited in Russia. Russian and British cultures developed in parallel: these countries fell behind the change of styles in Europe and kept national peculiarity. George Foster translated Russians annals, which were published in 1767 in London. E. Dashkova had a literary salon in Edinburgh.

The second middle of XVIIIth century Catherine II corresponded with philosopher E. Berk, who was famous in all other the world. Catherine II invited British architect Charles Cameron. He was the author of Agate Rooms, Hanging Gardens, Cameron’s Gallery.

The second middle of XVIIIth century. In connection with the formation of Sentimentalism, the interest in British culture intensified. The works of British writers were translated into Russian. In 1773 students of Art Academy were invited in Britain.

The early XIXth century. Since 1812, from the outset of the war with Napoleon, Russia became the significant country in Europe. British were interested in events of the war and Russian Cossacks, who were heroes of this war. British invited Cossacks in London.

XIXth and the early XXth centuries. Britain was very attractive for Russian parties in opposition. Russian philosophies taught that Russian and British empires were resembling, and appealed its for the rapprochement. After the revolution many Russian immigrants arrived in Britain. Among them – V. Nabokov, P. Milukov.

Britain was interested in Soviet Russia. In 1921 Great Britain concluded the trade agreement with USSR. In 1924 the diplomatic relations was organized. In 1934 G. Wales visited USSR. In 1930 Russian architect B. Lubetkin worked in Britain, he built London Zoo.

The modern facts. In 1960-1970 Russian-British cultural relations were extended. The British Council played a part in this. British Council work in Ecatherinburg since 1991. It gave the contemporain literature, organized the seminars and practical studies in Great Britain.

The tour of Maryinsky Theatre in Britain were principal cultural event in 2000. The theatre represented ten operas and ballets. The opera “Peace and War” of S. Prokofiev was represented in Britain for the first time.

The first Russian Winter Festival took place in London in January, 2005. This event was organized by the Russian-British Cultural Association and sponsored mainly by Russian businesses in the UK dedicated to the 60 th anniversary of the victory in the World War II. The main event took place in Trafalgar Square. For one day it became London's equivalent of Moscow's famous Red Square.

2014 was announced to be a Bilateral Russia-UK year. Celebrating the long cultural tradition of engagement between the two countries, the UK-Russia Year of Culture in 2014 delighted and surprised Russian and UK audiences and illustrated the way in which the relationship continue to develop new, creative and contemporary narratives in both countries.

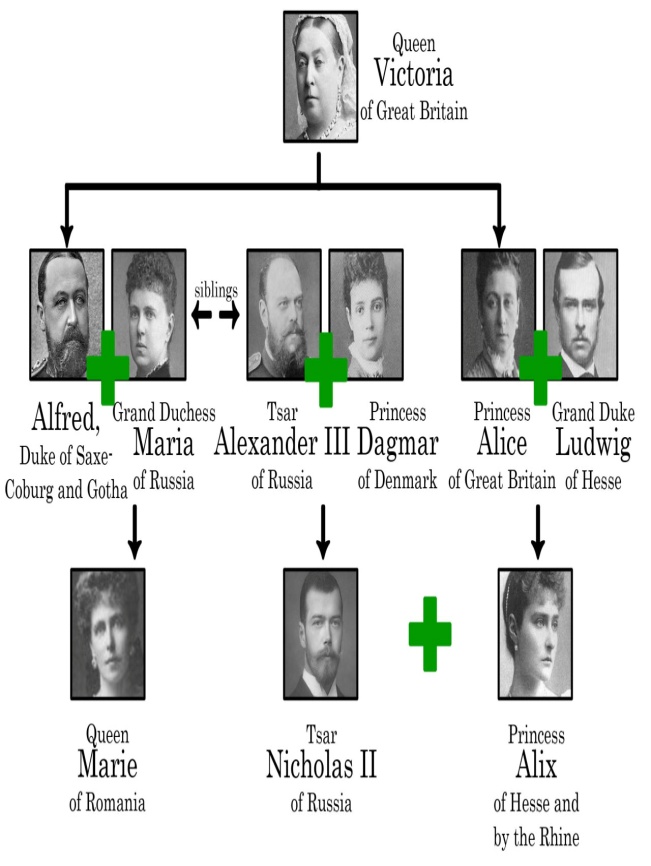
So we obviously have very tight bounds through the world history. Whatever differences might have divided us in the past they will not influence any more on our future as in a rapidly changing global environment Russia and the U K face new challenges and both are willing to solve them with grace and dignity because cultural, economic and social links have created a positive dynamic for the political relationship's evolution.

**DELICATE FACTOR-FAMILIY TIES**

The aspect of family ties will always remain one of the [core stone of](http://www.multitran.ru/c/m.exe?t=3681499_1_2&s1=%EA%F0%E0%E5%F3%E3%EE%EB%FC%ED%FB%E9%20%EA%E0%EC%E5%ED%FC%20%E2%ED%E5%F8%ED%E5%E9%20%EF%EE%EB%E8%F2%E8%EA%E8) the foreign policy especially between Russia and the United Kingdom because our countries have very tight bounds and they played a great deal of importance throughout history and determined cultural relationships as well.

Imperial relations between Britain and Russia started long before either of the families was on the throne, back in the days of Queen Elizabeth I. Ivan IV (better known as Ivan the Terrible), who was the earliest ruler to call himself a tsar, first established diplomatic and trading links with Britain in 1553. And as he was very ambitious tsar he decided to write a secret letter to make a proposal to Elizabeth I in 1569 but he received a rejection because according to the historian Felix Pryor, author of “Elizabeth I – Her Life in Letters”, has called it “quite simply the rudest letter Elizabeth ever received”.

But what failed in the 16th century became real in the 19th century when the two Royal families of The Windsors and The Romanovs finally intermarried and the main reason of it was the desire of stable and inviolable peace in the Europe. And also by this strategy Queen Victoria aimed to ensure the survival of royalty in the face of the fiendish and increasingly threatening forces of republicanism .So by the mid-1890s her grandson George – the future George V – was related by blood or marriage to virtually every royal family in Europe.



George and his family's relationship with his cousin Nicholas II of Russia was genuinely warm. The mothers of Nicholas II and George V were sisters, princesses from the Danish Court. Princess Alix of' Hesse, who took the name Alexandra prior to her wedding lo Nicholas, was the granddaughter of Queen Victoria . They shared such a striking physical resemblance that, when Nicholas went lo London for George's wedding , the young Russian heir was congratulated on his marriage by many confused guests. The success of their relationships was achieved by the wisdom of Nicholas 's mother and her intentions to raise him in the atmosphere of reverence for "Dear Georgie", Uncle Bertie and "Granny" (Queen Victoria) and also his easy disposition and interests in stamp collecting and shooting than politics made him a very convenient grandson who didn't notice attempts of British government like grabbing bits of Asia.



Thuswise Queen Victoria came round to the idea of being friends with the Russians and Nicholas married her favorite granddaughter, Alexandra of Hesse-Darmstadt and she began to take benefits of it right away in the question of reining the French aggression towards Britain and so her attitude (though not the British public's) towards the Russian royals transformed and she also gave him support in domestic policy and worried a lot about the effects on "poor dear Nicky and Alicky" if something went wrong like terrible events at Nicholas's coronation feast in 1896 when thousands died in a stampede due to the government's criminal lack of organization and accusation of the highest level of corruption in history among the aristocrats. 

Three generations and two royal families sit for a portrait during Cowes Week on the Isle of Wight in 1909. From left, the future Edward VIII, Mary, his mother and the future Queen of England; Alexandra, Queen of Great Britain; her granddaughter Princess Mary and her daughter Princess Victoria; Czar Nicholas II of Russia; King Edward the VII of Great Britain; Princess Olga of Russia, her mother Empress Alexandra, and her sister Princess Tatiana; the future George V, King of Great Britain; and Princess Marie of Russia. Seated in front are Czarevitch Alexis and Grand Duchess Anastasia, Nicholas and Alexandra's youngest children. The Tzar, his wife, and all their children would be executed by the Bolsheviks 9 years later.

So in bloody 1917 year when Nicholas abdicated and provisional Russian government asked the British to give the tsar and his family political asylum and The British government said yes but the ongoing events flourished unpredictably tragically and Nicholas and his family were murdered at Ekaterinburg 18 months later. Heart-broken King George focused his attention on the welfare of his relatives. The resulting dispute over his actions is not a historical trivia(some historians and witnesses believed that King George was convinced that if his now deeply unpopular cousin would have come to England, his own position would be threatened), rather it serves as the foundation for London's future condemnation of the Bolsheviks for executing the Romanov .And this was the main restraining reason in political relationships between two countries and only in the face of military threat(WWII) something began to change. But personal royal visit took place only in the year1994 when Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain made a historic state visit to Russia and this year what a coincidence was designated as the "[International Year of the Family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Year_of_the_Family)" by UN.

**SOLID BASIS OF CULTURAL RELATIONS**

Cultural exchanges may build a bridge over the troubled waters of politics and history and to heal wounds of the past and for sureit provides a platform from which to build stronger links between countries, governments and people. And what ultimately will help on this are the personal relationships built between individuals and institutions. From museum curators to theatre directors, ballet stars to musicians and artists. And the main aim of it is to keep up the dialogue between Russia and Britain.

One of the components of the solid basisis **the Pushkin House,** - the magnificent heritage of the British-Russian cultural relations.



Named after the Russian poet, it was set up in 1954 by a group of Russian friends in a house in west London for the “enjoyment, understanding and promotion of Russian culture in all its forms and for the exchange of views in a lively, informal atmosphere, with freedom of speech a core principle”. The well known history of heiress of Pushkin's family his youngest daughter Natalya,who found support and peace in love in London after years of grieve was also the good reason to establish it . So The mission of Pushkin House is to serve as a home and dedicated showcase for Russian culture, with a focus on Anglo-Russian cultural exchange. It aims to be a channel for cultural contacts, building links between Russia and the United Kingdom through informed understanding and the sharing of ideas. It provides education in the Russian language, and is a leading resource centre for individuals and institutions. Remarkable also is that the House has its own reference library of Russian culture, regular Russian language courses and sets cultural events with major museums and libraries.

And the new wind in this solid basis is the **Russkiy Mir Foundation,** established according to the decree by [Vladimir Putin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Putin) in 2007, as a government-funded organization aimed at promoting the [Russian language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language), and "forming the Russian World as a global project", co-operating with the [Russian Orthodox Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Orthodox_Church) in promoting values that challenge the [Western](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_culture) cultural tradition.



"The three meanings of this small but very meaningful word: mir stands for “peace” and “world”, as well as “community what genius illustrated another famous Russian author-Leo Tolstoy in his book "War And Peace" . So Russkiy Mir’s mission – to promote understanding and peace in the world by supporting, enhancing and encouraging the appreciation of Russian language, heritage and culture".

Consequently, Russkiy Mir promotes the teaching of the Russian language within Russia and abroad – both to new learners of the language and to those who already know and want to achieve fluency. It also elucidates Russia’s rich history, and illustrates the examples of Russian art and culture around the world. Russkiy Mir reconnects the Russian community abroad with their homeland, forging new and stronger links through cultural and social programs, exchanges and assistance in relocation. The Russkiy Mir Foundation promotes Russian culture by sponsoring cultural programs and supporting living examples of Russian arts and culture around the world as there are a lot of admirers of the great Russian artists, authors, composers and musicians such as Pushkin Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Bulgakov, and Tchaikovsky Shostakovich, Rastrapovich, Rublev, Kandinskiy, Glazunov, Brullov, Repin, Avazovsky, Serov and e.t.c. And nowadays these rich traditions continue by a new generation of talented Russian writers, artists and academics dedicating their efforts, knowledge and art to the global benefits of the humanity.

Another Russian institution devoted to support solid basis of cultural relation is ***Rossotrudnichestvo*** (RS), it has an impressive list of activities and partners in the UK despite its young age. **Anton Chesnokov, the Director of Rossotrudnichestvo in the UK about the mission of** *Rossotrudnichestvo:*“We see our top priority objectives are aimed at promoting Russian culture by educating about our country's vast historical heritage as well as giving everyone an opportunity to explore the modern Russia in the 21st century. So Its activities are based on cooperation with the Russian Community Council UK; Pushkin House - London's Russian Cultural Centre; the Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies; the Scotland-Russia Institute, an Edinburgh-based Russian cultural centre; the Association of Russian Cultural and Educational Organizations in the UK; Russian language centers; Russian societies in English and Scottish cities; and the Soviet War Memorial Trust Fund. Together with non-governmental organizations, Rossotrudnichestvo representative office in London organizes various events such as seminars, conferences, round-table discussions, exhibitions and competitions. Rossotrudnichestvo also offers language teaching, educational opportunities and support for cultural exchanges. but does not engage in commercial activities to top up its government funding because the remit of Rossotrudnichestvo is wider than just cultural exchanges with the host country, says Chesnokov. It actively works with Russian compatriots abroad, helping grass roots expat organisations keep ties with Russia, and with local people interested in things Russian. For example, it supports Znaniye Russian School, a leading independent supplementary school operating from several locations within the UK. The school caters for children whose mother tongue is Russian, especially those living in socially-deprived areas, helping them to break down language and culture barriers and fostering a sense of inclusion into their new community. Another example of its work, Chesnokov says, is a Russian Chess School for children aged 5-16, set up in cooperation with the UK Chess Academy.

And For those who want to follow the cultural events online, there is an online guide named “***The Kompass***”. The Kompass is a unique database with the most popular and interesting “Russian” places in London. Surfing through the website you can find different reviews written by London authors, actual information on different places and events from restaurants with authentic Russian to Russian banyas (steam baths) and enjoy the calendar of events to keep up on all Russian exhibitions. The Kompass is a part of Russia Beyond The Headlines (RBTH), an international project of the leading Russian daily Rossiyskaya Gazeta. The Kompass was the official media partner of the UK-Russia Year of Culture in the UK (2014).

***Counter party- the British Council***.

The British Council creates international opportunities worldwide for the people of the UK and other countries to the benefit of cultural relations and global education through programmes and services in the English language, the Arts, Education and Society, they have been doing this work since 1934. The British Council was founded by Sir Reginald ('Rex') Leeper, a British diplomat convinced of the importance of what he termed 'cultural propaganda' in promoting Britain. With an annual turnover of £900 million, it works in over 100 countries, offering English language teaching, educational opportunities and cultural exchanges to millions of people. Most of the British Council’s income comes from selling English language courses and administering exams around the world.



The head of British Council Russia Paul de Quincey says: “In our world it’s a country with huge importance to culture. The depth of Russian culture is huge, it goes back a long way. The quality of cultural institutions here is world renowned, so in many ways it is different from a lot of countries that I was covering.” The meaningful point of all these word were brought into focus in 2014 during the year of British-Russian cultural exchanges when the Ukraine crisis occurred but the position of the head of British Council Russia Paul de Quincey was clear:“We have found that in the cultural world people are wanting to overcome some of the problems and some of the hurdles...”, Mr. Quincey prefers not to call this work “cultural propaganda” or “cultural diplomacy”. He said: “It’s much wider than diplomacy and much softer than diplomacy. Our area is cultural relations, building trust and engagement between countries.”

So the UK-Russia Year of Culture took place in 2014 and was marvelous.

***UK-Russia Year of Culture 2014*** celebrated the rich and diverse cultural relationship of both countries. Over 250 events were set to take place across Russia and the UK between January and December 2014. BP became a Founder Sponsor. "Both the UK and Russia enjoy incredibly rich cultural heritages and these provide limitless opportunities to bring the two nations closer together," said Peter Charow, vice president of BP Russia. The main goal was to achieve the ‘springboard’ effect: to use the Year of Culture to create further opportunities and a self-sustaining network for UK cultural, educational and scientific institutions within Russia and, potentially, the wider Europe region.

Martin Davidson, Chief Executive of the British Council, talked to the Voice of Russia about cultural relations between two countries: “The most important thing is working with partners. So, we work with Russian partners from other parts of the country and we will continue to do that. I think this year is a very good example of how we are wanting to celebrate the close relationships, but also there is a point where we can launch an even closer set of activities for the future,” he continued. “I think that there is a lot of interest in Russian culture. Much in the same way as I think in Russia there is quite a traditional view of British culture, and I think the same is true in Britain about Russia. So, there is a huge interest in Russian music, in Russian ballet, in Russian opera, in Russian literature.”

**CONCLUSION**

Summing up, I'd like to stress that the identical understanding of importance of cultural relations and recognition of the fact that the monumental tasks are ahead and depend mainly on the mutual respect and sympathy are a great deal of success and serve a solid basis for relationship between two countries. So the Russian-British cultural contacts have a long history and are very diverse in nature. However, the 21st century — the epoch of intensified globalisation and transnational mobility — has produced new models of giving voice to cultures intended for exchange and consumption. A variety of intercultural links between Russia and the UK have grown to include various patterns of migration and tourism as well new forms of business, academic and cultural contacts. Contemporary patterns and practices of giving voice to cultures require new approaches to the British-Russian inter-cultural dialogue.

Of course this dialogue between our two great countries do not always run smoothly and we would be mistaken to think that a cultural festival and events are the answer to all the challenges we face. I do, however, believe that it signals a way in which relations can be reinvigorated, refreshed and revived. Indeed, even during the most testing moments in our recent relationship, cultural exchanges have continued. And this is important because there are many things that we share culturally. From Dostoyevsky to Shakespeare, Pushkin to Dickens, the Romanovs to the Tudors, Thon to Wren - great artists, architects and writers have enriched the cultural dialogue between our countries. Also an important factor is that cultural dialogue lead to better business and trade ties too. In recent years Russia has become an increasingly important trading partner for the UK.

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